Crisis Communication Plan

SCOPE OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN
A crisis communications plan is intended to ensure that, in the event of a crisis, disaster, or emergency related to a Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) event, information about the crisis and the action being taken is disseminated appropriately, accurately, and clearly.

Generally, an issue requiring the use of this plan will fall into one of two categories:

Emergency: Any situation that may involve or threaten to cause loss of life or injury to student-athletes, fans or students at an SSAC event. Examples: fires, explosions, accidents, tornado. These will be handled in consultation with each SSAC Members individual crisis management plan.

Non-Emergency: Any situation that threatens the reputation or stature of the SSAC, poses legal ramifications, but does not pose a direct physical threat to employees, students, or property. Crisis communication about situations that are controversial or sensitive in nature, but are not crises or emergencies (Athletic Department scandal, negative conduct by a student-athlete, serious outbreak of illness/disease, negative news coverage, etc.) will be handled by SSAC member(s) involved and the SSAC Commissioner if necessary.

Both types of crises will make news. Whether a crisis is deemed an emergency or non-emergency does not necessarily reflect on the gravity of the situation, particularly in terms of long-term consequences. In all cases, the college needs to provide full disclosure of factual information as quickly as possible, communicate instructions if necessary, and make decisions with full regard to individual privacy and legal responsibility.

PURPOSE
The purpose of the Crisis Response Plan is to serve as a guideline for implementing an effectual response to crisis situations at an SSAC event. No plan can cover all scenarios in which emergency action may be needed; therefore, the plan is fluid and adaptable.
CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM (CCT)

Primary:
- SSAC Commissioner
- Board of Presidents Chair
- Athletic directors Chair
- SSAC Assistant Commissioner
- Campus(s) liaisons

Secondary:
- SSAC Athletic Directors
- SSAC SID’s.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM - Responsibilities
In case of an emergency, first priority should be given to notifying appropriate emergency response agencies, specifically police, fire, or ambulance departments.

If a crisis situation should occur on a home campus, the CCT will mobilize and decide all appropriate measures to be taken in response to the crisis. To this end, the CCT has developed its own detailed operational structure to guide its response.

The responsibilities of the CCT include, but are not limited to:
- Clarifying facts surrounding the crisis and their impact on personnel, students and campus operations
- Determining how to notify the campus community of the incident
- Deciding if additional support services are needed (for example, psychologists/counselors from community)
- Directing internal and external communications content during and after the crisis
- Circulating throughout campus to act as support liaisons during crisis response
- Reminding faculty and staff to refer all inquiries to the Crisis Communication Spokesperson

To the extent possible, the following information should be gathered:
- Nature and location of emergency/disaster
- Whether persons have been injured
- Extent of property damage
- Disaster potential
CRISIS COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

1) Have a pre-arranged meeting place for the crisis communication group that may be at the event or that may need to be brought into communication by phone.

2) Assess the situation – gather all the facts and verify them. (Initiate Crisis Management Checklist)

3) Initiate the Crisis press release template – minimizes potential mistakes in releasing information.

4) Designate a spokesperson – SSAC Commissioner or SSAC Member University Media Spokesperson.

5) Designate a media center – stabilizes the crisis area.

6) Do not release names of dead or injured until relatives are notified - Out of respect for families involved, this should be enforced during crises involving death or injuries.

7) Respond to all media inquiries, but if you don't know the answer, say so - It is better for you to respond with, "I don't know right now, but I will try to get that for you as soon as possible," then to try to make up any sort of response. The conference needs to maintain credibility. It is better to say, "I don't know" than to risk giving out the wrong information.

8) Do not speculate - Credibility during a time of crisis is extremely important. Speculation into something may ruin that credibility. Once again, "I don't know" is better than giving out the wrong information. Also, never speak "off the record" with the media regarding your situation.

9) Manage the information – We will control the flow of information to the media. Being as open and honest as we can at the time will minimize rumors and conjecture of the event. We will keep record of all media sources you utilized and stay in contact with your sources after the event. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis or managing the image of a conference, communications are critical. Being able to quickly reach media sources to manage the correct flow of information is critical in a crisis.

10) Monitor social media and disseminate all releases and info on social media channels. Do not engage with those just trying to get a rise, but answer real questions when they arise and utilize AD’s and SID’s when necessary to control incorrect info being posted by student-athletes.
ATTACHMENT – CRISIS COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

___ Call the Crisis Management Team meeting ASAP
   If time is of the essence:
      ___ Meet at the site of the incident, if necessary
      ___ Confirm time for follow-up CCT meeting as soon as feasible

___ Call the Board of Presidents' Chair and Athletic Directors' Chair as a heads up if indicated by the situation

___ Commissioner/Chair maintains order and collects names, phones, and e-mails of all present at meeting

___ Review all available information from police / eye witnesses / best informants available
   __ Hold questions until each person's report is complete
   __ Confirm victim information and assign member to provide contact/outreach
   __ Confirm offender or possible suspect information and assign appropriate follow-up
   __ Confirm other affected parties' information and appropriate follow-up
   __ Determine coordinator for crisis debriefing sessions

___ Discuss and determine the primary issues of the situation
   ___ Is this a criminal case? What are the charges and possible penalties?
   ___ Is this a civil situation? Might the SSAC or Member university be negligent or liable?
   ___ Is this a Member university policy situation? What are the violations and the possible sanctions?
   ___ Is this a moral/ethical situation for the SSAC or Member university? What are the issues?
   ___ Who will be the important audiences for the SSAC or Member university's message(s)?
   ___ Will there be an outpouring of good will and who will coordinate that?

___ Assign the primary spokesperson if SSAC Commissioner is absent
   __ Identify experts who can be called upon to speak to the media
   __ Identify individuals/groups for just-in-time media training and contact for them

___ Determine the primary SSAC and/or Member university messages that will convey:
   __ Facts known to the SSAC and/or Member university that can be made public
   __ Concern and compassion for victims
   __ Commitment to work with authorities or others to resolve the situation
   __ Reasons the public can trust the SSAC and/or Member university to "do the right thing"

___ Determine how the university's messages will be communicated internal/externally

___ Anticipate information that will become available in the next 24/48 hours

___ Discuss possible scenarios in the evolution of the incident and possible resolutions to the situation

___ Decide when the next CCT meeting should be held and/or how the CCT will stay informed

___ Continue communication to convey facts, offer assistance to those affected, and adjust messages

___ Evaluate effectiveness of crisis management on a regular basis